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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
15 September 1954

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director, Intelligence

SUBJECT: Population and Economy of the Quemoy Islands

Chinese Nationalist holdings in the Amoy area include four islands with a combined area of about 70 square miles inhabited by a civil population reported by FOA to be 41,111 in April 1953.

Approximately 95 percent of the civilian population of the islands are farmers and fishermen. Their efforts in agriculture and fishing do not meet the demand for food on the islands and the existing deficit must be made up by importing rice and flour from Formosa. There is no industry in the islands.

The four islands in the Nationalist holding are Quemoy, Little Quemoy (Lieh Hsu), Tatan and Erhtan. The main island, Quemoy, is roughly dumbbell shaped, approximately 10 miles long, oriented generally east-west 6.5 miles east of the Communist-held island of Amoy. The eastern end of Quemoy is about eight miles across and the smaller western end is approximately 5.2 miles across. The two ends are connected by a neck two miles in breadth. The total area of Quemoy is about 60 square miles.

Midway between Amoy and Quemoy lies Little Quemoy, roughly circular in shape with an approximate area of seven square miles. Tatan and Erhtan are two rocky islets southwest of Little Quemoy in the mouth of Amoy harbor. They have a combined area estimated at three square miles.

The terrain of the islands is fairly flat with the exception of a rocky spine which begins in the neck of Quemoy and runs eastward to the high ground around Tai Wu mountain (elevation 826 feet) on the eastern end of the main island. The soil is poor and sandy and the islands have been stripped of trees to provide material for fortification and fuel.

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In June 1953 all of the available arable land was under cultivation. This amounted to 7,215 acres or 16 percent of the total area. Acreage planted in main crops was as follows:

Peanuts	2171.5 acres
Kaoliang	1882.5 acres
Sweet Potatoes	1531.9 acres
Soy Beans	407 acres
Vegetables	406 acres
Rice	49 acres
Miscellaneous	766 acres

In spite of generous use of chemical fertilizers supplied through FOA, crop yields were low in 1952. Production figures for that year show that sweet potatoes and kaoliang were the only crops grown in sufficient quantity to meet local needs. Food imports from Formosa to balance the deficit in that year amounted to 1,920 metric tons of rice and 150 metric tons of flour.

Agricultural food production is supplemented by fishing operations which bring in from three to five metric tons of fish per day. On days of late tide (five to seven days per month) the catch is increased to between seven and eight metric tons per day.

Local officials on the Quemoy Islands provided population figures which led FOA to conclude that as of April 1953 there were 41,111 civilians on the Quemoy Islands, with the heaviest concentration in Quemoy township where 6,366 people lived. The figures were further broken down to show that there were 19,267 males and 21,844 females on the islands. Five percent of the civilians were classed as merchants and officials. The remainder are farmers and fishermen.

A reading of the reports put out by FOA suggests that, while the Nationalists have made real efforts to improve the hard lot of the islanders, the situation of the latter on balance has been worsened by separation of the islands from the mainland and by occupation by the Nationalist garrison. In consequence, the islanders might be unwilling to be evacuated in the event of a Nationalist withdrawal.

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